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ABSTRACT

We inquire in this study into queer employees' experiences of managing the conflict between closet exposure and perceived authenticity at work, as well how this negotiation affects their career development. In the age of increasing support for workplace diversity, queer individuals still struggle with issues around identity disclosure, authenticity and career advancement. Method Qualitative study design, including semi structured interviews with 30 queer professional working in the United States. The data were thematically analyzed to examine the relationship between closet management techniques, feelings of authentic self, and projected career outcomes. Results indicate that, while disclosure contributes to a feeling of being real and fitting in, it also puts employees at risk for discrimination or stalled career promotion, resulting in elaborate negotiation tactics. The study suggests that authenticity can be a state not just of individual being, but one informed by relationality and context impacted by organizational culture and social forces. These findings highlight the significance of inclusive workplace policies that enable people to express their authentic self in order to positively influence queer career advancement. This study thereby adds to the organizational behavior literature by conceptualizing closet negotiations as a key element for interpreting diversity and inclusion outcomes. Theoretical and managerial implications are provided, and future research directions are presented.

Keywords: queer employees, closet negotiations, authenticity, career progression, workplace diversity, identity disclosure, organizational behavior

INTRODUCTION

The convergence of personal identity and professional experience is an increasingly popular theme within corporate discourse, as organizations increasingly underscore the importance of inclusivity, diversity and equity. But while LGBTQ+ visibility in general society continues to increase, and levels of acceptance also grow, a new study has revealed that queer workers still face significant obstacles when it comes to being out at work. One of the most torturous components of this navigation consists of what scholars refer to as “closet negotiations” — those ongoing, tactical processes by which queer employees decide as a matter of — when, how and to whom they shall disclose their sexuality or transgenderism in the workplace (Ragins 2008). These CUs are by no means easy to navigate, with employees having to walk the fine line between personal authenticity and professional retaliation that can significantly impact their mental health, well-being, and career. Based on the literature, while underground negotiations have been noted as occurring in practice Though it is clear that closeted negotiations are taking place there is still much to understand about how they influence authenticity for queer employees and the of their career.

There are several intersecting societal and organizational trends that make it urgent to study the dynamics of closet negotiations. At the same time, public attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people have become increasingly tolerant in many societies throughout the world — especially in Western countries. Legal and social recognition have been bolstered by legislative progress, including the legalization of same-sex marriage and protections against discrimination (Herek, 2016). Dovetailing with these broader trends, firms have become more active in adopting diversity and inclusion policies that cater to LGBTQ+ staff. Such measures include establishing employee resource groups, adopting anti-discrimination policies, and facilitating inclusive work environments (Ferdman, 2017). This said, the workplace climate and cultural acceptance is still very mixed, and gays and lesbians in organizations often work within a context that does not feel entirely safe or supportive to live openly (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). That means many queer professionals are stuck in day-to-day negotiations with the closet in which they weigh if coming out would lead to feeling more themselves or hold them back from career success.

The issue of authenticity at work is heightened in this conversation. Authenticity is commonly conceived of as the degree to which one’s self-concept matches one’s manifest behavior and has been found to be strongly related with psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and work

engagement (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). The type of queer self-scholars bring to work is, therefore, grounded in the level of acceptance and sense of safety experienced within a workplace. This is because to achieve authentic connection with other individuals and relieve the cognitive burden of inauthentic self-presentation associated with non-disclosure on the part of the queer person, disclosure should raise feelings of authenticity (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Yet, that can come with the associated risks of stigmatization, discrimination or more subliminal forms of bias which in turn could lead to decreased career and job security (Meyer, 2003). This double-bind of disclosure results in competing interests for authenticity and professional self-preservation, rendering closet negotiations a key practice with which queer employees must grapple within corporate spaces.

Adding another layer of complexity to this dynamic are shifts in work practices, specifically the increase in remote and hybrid working models, expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote work has changed the nature of workplace interaction, toning down the physical presence and relocation to virtual communication (Christiansen et al., 2021). Although remote work may allow queer employees more control over self-presentation and decrease certain types of microaggressions, it also can limit relationship-building and visibility opportunities that are beneficial for career progression (Caillier, 2021). These developments warrant a reconsideration of the impact of closeted negotiations in shifting work contexts and how they may affect atheneite and career advancement.

Despite increasing acknowledgement of these concerns, there is limited research examining the interconnection between closet negotiations, authenticity perceptions and career advancement. The empirical work on disclosure is considered distinct from that of authenticity, and existing dyads have investigated these openly with less numbers leaning out to their combined use in terms of advancing one's career (Day & Schoen Rade, 2000). Furthermore, most of the research has emphasized individual psychological outcomes to the neglect of exploring the social and organizational aspects of authenticity as a relational experience that is influenced by context (Ely et al., 2011). It has been suggested by researchers such as Schaub & Tokarska (2022) that we need to understand how queer identity management strategies influence career pathways via systemic and interpersonal processes, within various cultural and industry contexts.

To fulfill these gaps, the focus of this study is on how queer workers engage in closet negotiations and what impact such negotiations have on their perceived authenticity and career

advancement. In particular, this study seeks to investigate what closet management is and how it occurs, how the disclosure or concealment of a stigmatically social identity can make an individual feel inauthentic, and what happens when marginalized individuals engage or avoid situations that require them to authenticate their identity as they seek promotions, leadership positions, and job satisfaction. By using this multi-level approach, the study provides a fuller picture of the lived experiences of queer employees and offers practical implications for organizations to foster an environment where all workers can thrive while being themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The extent of identity disclosure for queer-identified employees is the focus of significant scholarly work, specifically informed by the conceptual theory of "workplace closet" (Ragins, 2008). This constitution relates to the strategic management of sexual or gender identity in workplace contexts and reflects the difficult decisions queer employees make about whether, when and how to disclose their true selves at work. It is through the lens of early foundational research such as Cass's (1979) sexual identity development model that we have come to understand these disclosure decisions. Cass's model offers phases and stages of identity confusion leading to synthesis that have been modulated by later scholars to the workplace environment where social jealously could be a danger for the employees. This developmental approach highlights the fact that disclosure is not an isolated occurrence, but a continuum of activity shaped by personal, interpersonal and organizational factors.

New research continues to shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure at work. Disclosure has frequently been associated with psychological safety, personal honesty, and positive well-being—those who feel as if they can be honest about their identity often report feeling more satisfied in their role or connected to their work team and experience lower levels of stress (Day & Schoenrade, 2000; Begeny et al., 2020). Authenticity, defined as the alignment of one's internal sense of self with external behavior has been linked to enhanced resilience and work-motivation (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Nevertheless, disclosure may also have undesired aspects for patients like being confronted with stigma and social exclusion or facing more subtle intergroup biases (Ragins & Cornwell., 2001). Fear of prejudice and its actual or perceived ramifications frequently compel queer employees to perform an extra level of emotional labor — a form of effortful covering where they hide or tone down cues that make others aware of their identity (Meyer, 2003). This work can be emotionally draining and may lead to burnout and

decreased well-being in the workplace.

Methodologically, a considerable amount of previous research on coming out at work with an LGB identity has relied on qualitative methods, particularly narrative and thematic analysis that are well-suited to capture the complex and idiosyncratic experiences of queer employees (Velez & Moradi, 2016). These methods allow us to investigate how people construct meaning through their strategies for managing identity, providing rich analysis of the social and affective aspects of closet maneuvering. For instance, qualitative interviews have revealed the nuanced ways that queer employees evaluate the risks and rewards of disclosing to particular coworkers, managers, or organizational cultures. Qualitative results typically underscore relational and situational dynamics of decision-making to disclose, such as the role of trust, support and organizational values in determining whether individuals (feel safe) to be open.

Concomitantly, quantitative research has contributed to measuring the relationships between disclosure, authenticity and career-related outcomes. These research projects tend to measure variables such as the frequency and depth of identity disclosure, perceived authenticity, satisfaction with one's job, promotion rates, experiencing discrimination at work via survey data. For example, Ragins and Cornwell (2001) used survey data to show that workplace perceptions of support for LGBTQ+ identity predict both increased levels of disclosure and career advantage. Such quantitative proof provides empirical support to theoretical conjectures about the positive effects of authenticity on self-expression but sheds light on the enduring inequalities experienced by queer employees in some organizational settings.

An emerging lens within this literature is that of intersectionality, which acknowledges the limitations of understanding identity disclosure and authenticity without attending to the multiplicity and interconnectedness of individuals' social identities (e.g., race, gender, class) (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009). Intersectionality approaches contend that the disclosure experiences of queer staff are determined not just by sexual orientation or gender identity but also by how these intersect with other facets of identity. For instance, queer employees of color may experience intersectional stigma and further layers of complexity when negotiating their closets because many intersecting experiences of discrimination are activated in this group. In this way, intersectionality tends to move the discourse towards better understanding of identity management in context of a larger social power and also diversity within populations including queer.

A number of substantive findings emerge from the recent literature that help to clarify closet negotiations, authentic selfhood, and career development. There is also a significant positive relationship between authentic self-expression at work and indicators of psychological well-being, as well as career satisfaction and success (e.g., higher levels of work engagement, job satisfaction, less burnout; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Griffith & Hebl, 2002). When queer staff members can show up fully at work, they generally feel more connected and motivated. In contrast, hiding the self commonly causes emotional distress and cognitive pressure and a sense of alienation that undermine well-being and task performance (Meyer, 2003). These results underscore the imperative of fostering organizational contexts where queer employees feel safe and valued.

Organizational cultural plays a crucial role in the expression of disclosure and feelings of authenticity. Supportive -- or inclusive -- organizational climates, as represented by supportive leaders and zero tolerance for discrimination, employees to share who they are (loosening suppression), support a greater sense of being true to the self (e. g., Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Negative, less or hostile supportive climates require purposeful hiding and create stressful identity management. The availability or unavailability of out LGBTQ+ role models and ally networks at work has implications for disclosure behaviors and career experiences (Ragins, 2008). These results indicate that organizational context is not simply a setting for identity work, but also is engaged in actively by employees.

There are however a few key gaps in the current work on disclosure and authenticity. Although several works have focused on psychic consequences and general workplace experiences, few made a direct reference between coming out negotiation process (in the closet negotiations) with clear career advancement indicators like promotions, leadership attainment, or salary gains across various industrial sectors (Schaub & Tokarska, 2022). With the ultimate goal of creating more inclusive environments in context of a career trajectory, it is necessary to learn how identity management strategies reflect into people's careers. Moreover, most of this work has focused on personal states and neglected the relational and contextual dimensions of authenticity as a negotiated social experience. Workplace authenticity is not only a personal sense of how genuine one feels at work, but also shaped by colleagues, managers and organizational systems. This relational aspect is under researched, in particular it’s intersectional with power and organizational structures.

A further key absentee consideration is how work has changed, with a much-mentioned development for example being in relation to virtual workplaces and hybrid working models that have changed the social context for queer employees in seeking to negotiate their sexual identity. To date, limited research has explored how these new-fangled work arrangements shape closeted negotiations and the perception of authenticity and career outcomes. Due to the fast development in work settings, research in this field is significantly required that has included these modern topics.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To investigate how queer employees manage their 'cloak' status in the workplace.

In order to comprehend how Authenticity is related to these negotiations.

To explore how these are potentially affecting career advance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

How do gay workers strategize disclosure across workplace settings?

How does reading these stories impact their honesty or lack of it?

How do this chamber deals affect impressions of career opportunities?

SIGNIFICANCE

By synthesizing the notions of authenticity and career advancement through the lens of closet negotiations, this research makes a valuable contribution to knowledge on how queer workers navigate their identity within organizations. It illuminates the tensions between maintaining authenticity and managing professional progression—a dynamic that is largely absent from prior studies. The results can support more nuanced diversity and inclusion policy to enhance both academic conversation as well as practice. Such policies can more effectively enable all LGBTQ+ employees to develop their careers well, supporting work environments in which they do not have to hide aspects of themselves at the expense of their career success, and advancing fairness and organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study to gain in-depth insights into the subjective and subtle nature of queer employees' closet negotiations, perceived authenticity, and career advancement. This approach is consistent with previous research indicating that identity disclosure and identity management are complex phenomena in professional domains (Velez & Moradi, 2016). In particular, qualitative research is well positioned to capture the depth and

context of data that reveal the personal and social dimensions of workplace identity decisions—phenomena resistant to quantification but central to understanding the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, which proved to be a flexible and yet coherent structure for participants to speak in their voices about their experiences. This approach enabled the researcher to focus on targeted issues such as strategies for disclosure, being genuine at work, and effects on career advancement while still leaving room open for other themes or ideas that might be considered in a participant-by-participant fashion. Its semi-structured nature engendered a conversational undercurrent that promoted openness and depth, creating an environment for participants to disclose sensitive information about their identity and workplace with relative ease.

They recruited 30 queer practitioners who self-identified as LGBTQ+ using a purposive sampling strategy. We recruited from a variety of industries: technology, finance, healthcare and education spanning across organizational contexts. The diversity was deliberate to reflect a variety of contexts and obstacles faced in closet negotiations and career trajectories across sectors. We focused on individuals between 25 and 45 years old to ensure that we had a span throughout early, mid-level, and senior stages of career. This age group was chosen to investigate how the negotiation of silence and revelations about being closeted shift over time and career development. Interviews were held over video conferencing tools bearing in mind the geographical diversity of participants and issues around accessibility and ease. The duration of each interview was 60 to 90 minutes which were long enough for in-depth discussion of the important themes and moderate participant fatigue.

With the permission of participants, interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed exactly as spoken to ensure that there was no loss of meaning. Data analysis Transcripts were analyzed with the aid of NVivo 12 (QSR International), which supports systematic organization and coding of qualitative data. Thematic analysis was used, and we followed a strict six-step framework set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process comprised of familiarization with data, generating initial code(s), searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming theme(s) and the final report. Through the use of thematic analysis, rather than statistical correlations or ‘frequencies in’ analysis as befitting qualitative research, we were able to discern overt and underlying patterns across participants’ accounts pertaining to closet negotiations,

perceived authenticity and career prospects. This analytic approach allowed the study to stay close to participants' voices while allowing for the extraction of generalizable insights.

Whole study was conducted with ethical principles. Simplifications were made to conform the study to the ethical permission of the Institutional Review Board on research with human subjects. Informed consent was obtained before data collection after the participants were presented with specific information regarding the aim and procedures of the study, as well as potential risks and benefits. Participant confidentiality and privacy were safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms and anonymizing any identifiable information in transcripts or reporting to prevent identification. Participants were aware that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty, and there was no coercion during recruitment or participation. Due to the sensitive topic of personal identity and work encounter, special care was taken that participants were emotionally safe during session lifting provided by them with information or referrals in case feelings of distress developed. In general, these ethical principles preserved participants' autonomy, privacy and welfare, engendering the trust and openness necessary to the research.

The study, thus enriches the (qualitative and ethically responsible) literature by providing a nuanced and holistic account of how queer employees negotiate their identity within workplace life, and how these negotiations are impacting on who they are able to 'be' at work, as well as their career mobility. The methodological quality and the variety of the sample enhance trustworthiness and transferability of results both for scholars' and practitioners' use.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Analysis of interviews with thirty queer professionals identified three central intersecting themes: (1) strategic disclosure and concealment, (2) authenticity as relational and contextual, and (3) the career consequences of closet negotiations. These themes offer insight into the paths along which queer employees maneuver their identities within workplaces and their career impacts.

Respondents articulated very skilled means of disclosing, strategically considering whom within the organization one can share one's personal life with according to who was open or not and based on the organizational culture and possible repercussions (Gonsalves et al., 2008). This selective disclosure, or "selective outing," was an ongoing balancing act between authenticity and self-protection. Several participants highlighted that they would need to tailor their disclosure differently in different social situations and with particular colleagues. For instance,

others would be very open about their sexual or gender identity with near peers and allies but not tell upper management or external people. This is in line with Ragins' (2008) notion that the workplace closet can be seen as a dynamic, negotiated space and not an identifiable end-point. "Im out to my immediate team for now, as they have shown that they support me but in client meetings or with senior leadership as it could go 50-50," wrote another commenter. Decisions like this underscore the ongoing work of identifying that frequently means sifting dispositions and organizational signals.

The second theme focused on the relational and contextual quality of what constitutes something as to be authentic, thereby subverting the assumption that being authentic is simply an internal psychological state. Participants consistently referred to authenticity as comprising social affirmation and recognition in the workplace. Feeling real was almost synonymous with the extent to which their queer identity was recognized, validated and valued by co-workers and in the organization. "I no longer am just feeling authentic by being 'out,' but actual need my workplace to acknowledge that part of me so I can feel like I can bring my whole self to work," one interviewee said. This is consistent with social identity and minority stress theories which posit that having one's identity externally validated has a positive effect on psychological health (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Meyer, 2003). It is also consistent with the evidence presented by Griffith and Hebl (2002) that LGB employees' authenticity at work is not a fixed characteristic, but an evolving feeling by virtue of one's interactions with and environment of professional experience. Representatives of more inclusive employers felt they could be themselves to a greater extent Representatives from less supportive organizations reported emotional labor and identity fragmentation as they concealed parts of their lives in order to defer stigma.

The third primary theme was the impact of closet negotiations on careers. The relationship between career advancement and disclosure was perceived too often be a double-edged sword. Others who were more open about their LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer) gave voice to the benefits that came with doing so: mentorship opportunities, leadership roles and alignment with organizational values. This helps to underscore the Ragins and Cornwell's (2001) point that disclosure can serve as a catalyst for career mobility within an affirming climate. "When I finally felt safe enough to be open, I found the mentors who really helped and supported me to move into management," one said. But some of the encounters weren't friendly. Some participants described encountering the kinds of small slights, or microaggressions and

stalled promotions post disclosure that particularly flourish in industries and companies without strong inclusivity policies. These negative career consequences often justified participants' choices to hide their identities or reveal only within trusted circles. That's because this duality reflects strikingly durable attitudes about what being out at work entails for LGBTQ employees.

While being primarily qualitative, the frequencies of coding offered quantitative insights which complemented the analysis. About 70% of the people who reported feeling authentic in their job also believed that positive career experiences had happened to them, such as promotions, raises or new challenges. Only about 40% of those who hid their queer identities felt as positively about that they knew where their careers were headed. Such a trend implies an association between authenticity and perceived career success (but this is tentative, as the qualitative nature of the study has the limitation on sample size). These results parallel previous quantitative studies that have associated authenticity with job satisfaction and engagement (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) that may affect the pace of career progression.

To further illuminate these findings, tables presenting strategies of disclosure, reported levels of authenticity perceived, and career impact perceived were constructed. These graphics visualized trends along organisational cultures, industries and career stages – patterns that appear to support existing research baselines. For example, technology and education two sectors with established diversity and inclusion programs were more likely to manifest selective disclosure and authenticity than finance or healthcare—sectors that traditionally have conservative organizational cultures—and some degree of concealment or career obstacle. To the extent that these sectoral trends hold, they offer guidance to workplace leaders seeking to more effectively promote inclusive climates for authenticity and career advancement.

DISCUSSION

Our findings contribute to literature demonstrating a positive association between identity disclosure, authenticity and psychological well-being among queer employees. Finally, in keeping with Kernis and Goldman's (2006) seminal work, the results confirm that openness at work can lead to both increased CDM and increased experience of authenticity which is in turn associated with enhanced job satisfaction and greater well-being. Nonetheless, the present research contributes to earlier work by highlighting that authenticity is more than an internal mental condition; it is also highly relational and contextual. This is close to Ely et al. 2011) in which inclusive context with safety and social support is a pre-requisite to being one's authentic

self. These results suggest that the extent of queer employees' authenticity varies with such identity-acknowledging and -validating experiences on behalf of colleagues and organizational policies, attesting to cultural and social aspects as predictors in workplace experiences.

Lastly, this study supports Ragins' (2008) idea of "strategic disclosure" showing how queer employees are engaging in conscious self-regulation on when and to whom they disclose their identity with consideration of the potential benefits for authenticity versus risks related to stigma and discrimination. The results also corroborate the duality of how disclosure affects professional advancement that has been discussed by Ragins and Cornwell (2001), supportive climates that provide opportunities for mentoring and leadership, versus non-supportive environments which may result in subtle biases or stagnation in career progression. By painting a picture of such intricacies in multiple sectors, the paper adds nuance to ongoing discussions about workplace identity management.

Practical implications: In practice, there are important conclusions that organizational leaders and HR professionals concerned with developing equity and inclusion programs must consider regarding these findings. The research indicates that making the workplace safe and comfortable for queer employees to share their identity is not just about personal well-being, but also factors into fair career advancement. To do so, companies must have robust practices that are more than non-discrimination clauses and encourage allyship, visibility and holding leaders accountable on inclusivity for LGBTQ+ employees. Programs like employee resource groups, unconscious bias training through the lens of diversity and senior leaders who advocate for LGBTQ+ rights can greatly reduce the negative career implications of coming out. This is consistent with the viewpoint of Bilimoria, and Stewart (2009) that suggest adopting intersectional diversity policies which address employees' multiple identities. Creating a culture where "coming out becomes coming in" (as an organization lawyer has described it) — wherein disclosure is met with affirmation, not retribution — can unleash the full power of queer talent and promote a place for everyone at work, yet as they share experiences.

However, there are several limitations to this study. Although the qualitative research design is appropriate in capturing rich and complex experiences, our findings may not be generalizable to other populations. The small sample size and the convenience sampling method suggest that findings are not generalizable to diversity of experiences among queer employees, especially in other cultural or organizational settings. Additionally, the sample was largely comprised of

participants located in the U.S., thus limiting generalizability to international situations in which legal protections, social norms, and work practices may be radically distinct. Syed and Pio (2010) experienced similar limitations in their cross-national exploration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/ questioning(LGBTQ+)identity management and confirmed the call for more culturally comparative research. However, future studies could overcome these limitations through sampling a larger and more varied sample and for example using mixed-methods approaches that offer both depth as well as breadth in the analyses.

Future directions for research should also consider longitudinal investigations that follow the career pathways of queer employees over time to provide insights into long-term effects of versus outcomes associated with disclosure and authenticity. Mixed-method designs that integrate qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys or organizational data may offer more holistic understandings of how closet negotiations change and impact career development at various stages and in diverse contexts. There is also an urgent need to further investigate ID management in the context of intersectionality, namely how race, gender identity, social class and disability intersect with sexual orientation to impact disclosure experiences and career consequences (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009). Intersecting frameworks may enhance our understanding of the multifaceted issues queer employees experience, and thus help to develop more targeted workplace strategies.

The findings of this study have interdisciplinary implications for organizational psychology, human resource management and queer studies. Combining disciplines, the study provides a holistic view on how identity negotiation processes influence individual well-being as well as organizational outcomes. For the organizational psychology, the research highlights the relevance of social context in shaping authenticity and employee engagement. There are real applications in HR of how such tactics can shape the design of inclusive policies and career development programs. At the same time, queer studies receive empirical evidence on contemporary forms of labor dynamics, contributing to theoretical discussions about identity, visibility and power. Such an interdisciplinary approach not only expands the reach of research, but it also provides a foundation for comprehensive efforts to create inclusive and authentic work environments that enable queer employees to flourish both personally and professionally.

CONCLUSION

This research adds notable new insights into the dynamics of queer employees' closet

negotiations by revealing the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between disclosure, perceived identity management authenticity, and work outcomes. Contrary to conventional perspectives which depict authenticity as only a personal psychological condition, this study emphasizes that authenticity is inherently shaped by social forces and strongly embedded within the wider collective norms and social processes in the work setting. The results also indicate that the extent to which queer employees can be open about who they are is dependent on their openness, but also on whether and how colleagues, supervisors or organizational policies confirm and support their authenticity. The social dimension of authenticity is also important given that it has a bearing on employees' sense of belonging, psychological safety and ultimately careers.

It also underscores the two-sided coin of coming out: In favorable theaters, it can widen opportunities for mentorship and leadership and stimulate career development, but in unsupportive climates it can also leave employees vulnerable to unconscious bias, microaggressions or a failure to progress. This nuanced perspective has implications for both identity management and minority stress theoretical models and can guide the organizational practices necessary to create a truly inclusive workplace. It makes clear that D&I initiatives need to shift from a check-the-box mentality to psychological safety and visible allyship that gives our queer employees the freedom psychologically to make their own, personal closet negotiations without fear of retaliation.

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